

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, FR, UK

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: BLOCH INTERVIEW ON CONCORDE 2

1. NEWSMAGAZINE LE POINT IN ITS LATEST ISSUE PUBLISHES INTERVIEW WITH GEN. RENE BLOCH, AUTHOR OF STILL SECRET REPORT ON CONCORDE PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY GOF AND WHICH SERVED AS BASIS FOR GOF DECISIONS OF LAST FEBRUARY ON CONTINUATION OF PROJECT. TEXT FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.

2. WHILE ENIGMATIC CONCERNING SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS OF HIS REPORT, BLOCH HAD FOLLOWING TO SAY DURING INTERVIEW:

A) HE OPPOSED GOF MAKING OVERTURES TO US FOR COOPERATION ON SECOND GENERATION SST, SINCE HE BELIEVED THAT US COULD BE RELIED ON TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP IF THERE WAS ANY INTEREST WHATEVER IN THIS DIRECTION IN US. BLOCH (A GRADUATE OF HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL) DECRIED CRITICISM OF US FOR ALLEGEDLY TRYING TO KILL CONCORDE AND THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY; US INDUSTRY, HE NOTED, OPERATES ON BASIS OF PROFITABILITY AND HE REGRETTED THAT PROFITABILITY WAS ONE FACTOR THAT HAD NOT

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BEEN ADEQUATELY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AT OUTSET OF

CONCORDE PROGRAM.

B) HE QUESTIONED ADVISABILITY OF MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR SECOND GENERATION SST BEFORE FIRST GENERATION CONCORDE WAS EVEN PLACED IN SERVICE.

C) IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ORDERS FOR CONCORDE WILL EXCEED THIRTY AIRCRAFT (INCLUDING NINE ALREADY ON ORDER) "IN THE INITIAL PHASE" (UNDEFINED).

D) AVERAGE PRICE OF 173 MILLION FR. (\$36 MILLION) PER CONCORDE ORDERED BY AIR FRANCE WAS BASED ON ASSUMPTION OF PRODUCTION OF 150 AIRCRAFT. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS COST OF EACH AIRCRAFT WILL BE 40 PERCENT HIGHER AND ALLOWANCE MUST ALSO BE MADE FOR FURTHER ESCALATION OF COSTS DUE TO INFLATION BETWEEN NOW AND TIME OF DELIVERY. BLOCH SAID IT WAS POSSIBLE THEREFORE THAT BY TIME OF DELIVERY COST OF CONCORDE WILL HAVE DOUBLED COMPARED TO PRICE ORIGINALLY CONTRACTED FOR BY AIR FRANCE AS OF JULY 1971.

E) BLOCH NONETHELESS URGED PLACING CONCORDE INTO COMMERCIAL SERVICE SOONEST IN ORDER TO SEE WHAT RESULTS WOULD BE, AND HE VOICED OPTIMISM THAT IF CONCORDE CAPTURED CLIENTELE OTHER AIRLINES WOULD THEN BE FORCED TO BUY CONCORDE IN ORDER COMPETE.
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